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August 27,2001. I was just a few weeks ago in Holland,visiting my family (not very big anymore),that I had not seen for 54 years.In January 1948 I went to live in the city of Barranquilla,Colombia,South America,after I had married my second husband,Werner Schaps, in Amsterdam on October 31,1947.About this event I'll write later. My only cousin left,knowing that I cannot afford to pay nearly US$ 900.-- for a plane-ticket,offered to pay for it.As she said: I want to see you and
my children want it too. I stayed 3 weeks in Holland,partly in the Hague,where my cousin lives and partly at a friend's home in Amsterdam and at a second cousin's home near Amsterdam..Being in the Hague I invited my cousin to visit the miniature city of Madurodam.All the important buildings from Holland are represented there, like f.i. the "Nieuwe Kerk" (a very old church in Amsterdam,in w hich all the members of the "House of Orange" were married) .Also the old palace in Amsterdam,where the queens would stay for a short time, Schiphol the International Dutch airport,with miniature planes; then little rivers with little boats,.railroads with miniature trains , etc.,etc.The parents of a young man,George Maduro,born on the island of Curacao (Net herlands Antilles),who died in the Second Worldwar, against Germany,founded the Miniature city in his memory. The proceeds go to a Students-Sanatory.
To come back to my story about marrying my second husband: he came from Barranquilla to Amsterdam on a business-trip.We met at mutual friends,friends of his parents from before the second world-war,in Hamburg,Germany,where he was born, and friends of mine from after the war.After having met twice,going for a walk along the canals of Amsterdam,he proposed marriage.It was true,that we had very interesting conversations,but after only 2 nights meeting each other was a "little" too fast!!

Visit Holanda

I am now nearly 84 years old and can say without exaggeration,that I go to synagogue for more than 80 years,since I was 3 or 4 years old,then walking at the hand of my beloved father: he proud of his first-born little daughter and I proud that my father did not think it a bother to take me with him at such a young age.The "En Kalohanu" which was sung in Temple King Solomon of Miami Beach, when I went there for the first time in August 1982,was the same melody I heard so many years ago,as a little girl in the synagogue of the small town where I was born and then later in Amsterdam.I come from a family of Chazanim: my dad functioning as a Cantor during the High Holidays,in small communities,where there was no Minyan the rest of the year. He was at the same time also the Baal Koreh (the person that reads the Torah) and the one to blow the Shofar.The oldest brother of my dad was a professional Cantor in Antwerp (Belgium) for many years and in Amsterdam (Holland) later on.And his son,my cousin,when he grew up,became a Cantor too. I can say that I have lots of experience in Chazanuth,but as a member of Orthodox and/or Conservative synagogues there was no chance for me to become a Cantor.But I never before have heard so beautiful services as in Temple King Solomon on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach on the High Holidays of 1982 and later years. Unfortunately Rabbi David Raab died of a heart attack in January 1986 and shortly thereafter the Synagogue had to be closed. From 1980 on I came regularly to Miami Beach with my husband,who had to be treated in Mount Sinai Medical Center with chemo-therapy and radiation for his lymphoma.Sorry to say: my husband, (z.l.) passed away in June 1985.

F

Miami

Before my parents were married in March 1917 in Amsterdam ,Netherlands, my dad bought on recommendation a pastry-shop in a small town,Meppel, in the province, named Drenthe in the North-Eastern part of the Netherlands.The owners were getting old,their children did not want to take over and so they decided to sell the pastry-shop with the bakery in the back. There was sufficient space next to and behind the shop for living-quarters and there were even two extra rooms,which my parents rented to a couple,without children. Mr.Beunk,a piano-teacher,.waa busy with his students most of the day. The Beunks were really.nice and distinguished people and my parents became very fond of them.Also I,then perhaps three or four years old loved Uncle and Aunt Beunk very much and frequently knocked on the door of their study,so that they would let me in, to be with them and to listen tothe music, played by "uncle" Beunk and his students.I had to sit very quietly on the sofa and would have to leave the room immediately if I started to talk or otherwise would be "naughty". .That was the rule,which I most of the time followed.Between the many students there also was an elderly gentleman,who was rather bald.One day I was sitting on the sofa,as so often,trying to get the attention of "aunt" Beunk and indicating with my index-finger to my head,behind the back of the elderly student,that this gentleman was bald, and saying at the same time ,still in a low voice : "he is bald" ."Aunt" Beunk, all embarrassed, tried to quiet me,so that I should keep my mouth shut.But nothing of the same.All of a sudden I shouted in a loud voice,of course being heard by the gentleman,the piano-teacher and his wife :"the man is all bald".The same minute "aunt" Beunk took me by my arm,not very smoothly,and shoved me out of the room. There was much consideration with the teacher and his wife and so my parents punished me by not allowing me into the study for several days.

I had a very lovely early childhood,both my parents,when time permitted it,occu-pying themselves with me: teaching me small poems,which I still remember,after nearly 80 years; reading little stories to me,which I loved ,and teaching me some letters of the alphabet and numbers from one to ten.

As especially my dad was orthodox,our pastry-shop was closed on Shabbath and open on Sundays.Not all the workers were willing to come to work on a Sunday.(I am talking about the years between 1920 and 1923) so my father got up very early,around three o'clock in the morning,to prepare all kinds of pastries and cookies for the sale on Sundays.And always,I don't understand how I possibly could have known that it was a Sunday,I got up from my bed.going down the stairs,without being afraid of the dark and seating myself next to my dad, looking at the work he was doing, sometimes even being allowed to help with small tasks,which of course made me very proud.

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For my first birthday my grandmother (my mother's mother) came over from Amsterdam,to celebrate with us.She took me secretly to the jewelry-store next door,owned by Mr.van Esso,later also one of my grown-up friends,had my ears pierced and bought me a pair of small earrings with a little ruby in them.But the happiness over this present did not last long.One night my mom woke up because she heard me screaming and when se came into my room,she found me sitting up in bed with a corner of my bedspread caught on one of my earrings.My mom took the earrings of and never put them back again.I could look at them in a nice little jewelry-box.

There was little danger, no cars yet in the streets,only horse-driven carriages for

When I was a little girl I was as free as a bird. In the town where I was born there was not much traffic, no automobiles, only horse-driven cars and no danger in the streets . In the morning I would ran out of the house to visit my several friends .Everybody loved me and had something to offer me : a cookie, a candy at the Mulder family [not Jewish]. Mr.Mulder had a bread -bakery ,Mr. Poetsma the same.There I went to play with his little daughter,Zusje.And I had other friends, young and not so young, f.i. Mr.van Esso,a jeweler.He would lift me up to his work-table and I was looking at what he was doing .And the best visit was at Mr.Frank,the Jewish butcher.He had in his store a salami,especially for me.One Monday-morning a lady came in the store and wanted some meat.The meat had not been brought in and Mr.Frank told her so, on which the lady said "and what about the salami,hanging there on that hook ? Mr.Frank answered: oh,no that is only for Dolly and for nobody else...
Mr.Frank had a huge garden with many fruit-bushes and I could pick and eat as many fruits as I wanted..But I was really not a spoiled brat.
Another sign of my being so free and without fear was,when there was going to be a circus in town and all the animals,big and small came walking through the "Hoofd-straat" (Main-street),where I lived with my parents. I was between three and four years old and walked behind those huge elephants as if I belonged to the circus.But at a certain moment somebody looking at the parade,asked "where does that little girl belong?". Someone of the onlookers answered: "I know this child,she is the little daughter of the jewish baker". A huge and tall man. in the crowd took me on his shoulder and brought me to the bakery,where my Mom was helping a customer. She had not even missed me,because I was always "lost" somewhere. The man asked my Mom: "does this child belong here? and of course my Mom answered yes and asked him; 'where did you find her?'" and he told her.
As my parents were orthodox,the bakery was closed on Shabbat and open on Sundays .My Dad would not sell Friday's leftovers on Sundays,so he took them home for us. My Mom would invite a few little girls,to "help" finish the goodies,
especially so that I could see how they enjoyed them,as I was a picky eater and not interested in eating.I weighed abt.42 lbs.when I was eight years old..My Mom took me from one pediatrician to another,but they never found anything wrong. I started to eat like a horse when I was abt.14 years old and soon weighed 54 kilograms.
Right after the first worldwar everything was very expensive,an egg costing one Dutch guilder,a 100 pound bag of flour 100 guilders and so on.Customers were not willing to pay 30 guilders for a cake or pie and little by little business became impossible and my dad had to close the store.

There was little danger, no cars yet in the streets,only horse-driven carriages for weddings and funerals. The vegetable-vendor came also with his carriage and horse,selling his merchandise from door to door.The big attraction was when he allowed me and other children to sit on the bench next to him for a while,sometimes allowing us to hold the reins.

I was afraid of rain.I remember clearly,when I was 5 years old,that my mother sent me to the butcher,to buy 2 lbs. of ground meat.When I was already near my destination it started to rain quite hard and,instead of continuing my way,in my desperation I ran back home. Of course my mom was rather angry with me and as soon as the rain stopped,I had to go back again,to do my errand. The house of Mr. Frank,the butcher had still another attraction: he had a huge garden,like a small park,full with fruit-trees and fruit-bushes: and I could eat as much as I wanted of the raspberrries and other kinds of berries,when they were ripe.

Of course I had,besides the many grown-up friends,also children my own age to play with. There was Zusje Poetsma,the little daughter of another bread-baker, who lived next door.We played together with the grocery-store,I got as a present when I turned four years old. We weighed raisins and nuts and choco- lates,selling them to our imaginary customers and then eating them ourselves. Then there was Simon Hofstra,the little son of a cigar-manufacturer,with whom I played marbles in the huge warehouse.

In the summer on Shabbath my parents often took me to the park,to feed the ducks in the pond or in autumn to pick beechnuts in a small forest. Or we went to visit very dear friends of my parents,the Wolfs, who had 3 daughters: Saartje,Matje and Jeanetje plus an "adoptive" daughter,Edith,who was sent to Holland from Vienna, Austria after the First Worldwar, with a big group of Jewish children,who suffered hunger,to be located with Jewish families in all bigger cities of the Netherlands.Edith made a big impression on me,because she spoke German,which I of course did not understand.

But she learned Dutch very quickly. After a year or so all the children went back to their own families.

Until I was abt. 6 years old and living in Meppel I was a happy child,not afraid of many ~~anything~~s not the rats running around at night in the dark,nearly unavoidable because of the many 100 lbs-bags of flour,etc. nor the chickens in the home of one of my mom's elderly friends,who had also a bakery ,but mainly for all kinds of bread and cookies. I would shut myself in with the chickens in their pen, pretending that I myself was a chicken,then letting them all loose,so that old Mr. Mulder had to come out of the bakery,chasing behind the chickens and me and getting them all back in the pen. And,of course, I was sent home to my mom. Still, everybody loved me and my mom had to send the maid nearly every day to try to find me in someone's home,where I was visiting or asked to come in to give me a cookie, like in the breadbakery,or a piece of salami in the butcher-shop.
I was afraid of drunks and of a certain man,living in the neighbourhood,who was an invalid and walked rather strangely. Always when seeing him walking in the street I ran away as fast as my little legs could take me.But one day,when passing by his house,his old mother asked me in and then I found out that there was really no reason to be afraid of him.He was a nice man and we became friends.I was then between 3 and 4 years old. When I turned 4 years,my parents, did not want to send me to the only nursery-school there was in Meppel,because it was a Catholic school. That was the reason I was so free to go where-ever and when-ever I wanted to go out.

My dad became a salesman for several Dutch companies in the food-business. He had to work hard,visiting groceries in and near Meppel,riding his bicycle or taking the train to cities farther away,leaving very early in the morning.We had moved meanwhile from Main-street,where the pastry-shop had been located, to a nice two-story landhouse with a garden in the front and another in the back. I loved to sprinkle the garden in the afternoon in summer. My mom took an old spinster in,an invalid,together with her companion. They had two big rooms downstairs and my mom provided the meals. This income helped to pay the rent of the landhouse.

After a few months my parents decided to go back to Amsterdam,where they where born and where the members of both families lived. My mom was expecting a baby and my sister was born on November 15,1923. My dad brought my mom to the hospital the night of November 14 and went back to the hospital the next morning to find out if the baby was born.The information was:"yes,you have a girl",on which my dad answered: "impossible".He wanted so much to have a son. My sister was so tiny and weighed only a little over four lbs,when she was born.She needed a lot of heat and special care during the icy winter-cold in Holland.

As I was such a picky eater and weighed much too little for my age my mom took me to a pediatrician,who found nothing wrong with me physically.Later my mom took me regularly to that same pediatrician.As a matter of fact I was seldom ill besides the normal child-diseases,like German measles and chicken pox. No whooping cough nor other more serious illnesses,thank God. At age 7 1/2 I weighed only 21 kilos and that was really too little.When I was nearly 8 years old,the pediatrician suggested to my mom to send me to a health- camp.There was one Jewish camp near the beach,not far from Amsterdam, another in the middle of the country with beautiful forests and hills.There are no mountains in the Netherlands,which has many flat-lands. As in summer, when it is hot,children have less appetite,it was decided that I should go in winter to the camp in the forests. I was there 6 weeks,but it was suffering for me from the beginning till the end,because I was terribly homesick. My parents got a special permission to visit me on my 8th birthday,January 20, 1926,but that made it worse.While other children,mostly poor, ate mountains of food and gained at least 12 to 15 lbs. in those 6 weeks,I hardly could get down one slice of bread or a small plate of food.The director of the camp, an old maid of at least 60 years old,with a sour-looking face and even more sour ways of handling children.(she apparently had not studied psychology).I am talking of December 1925 till end of January 1926,was literally bending over me every morning with all her height,menacing me with her index-finger and yelling at me,that if I should throw up my food,I would have to start all over again.That did not help her or me. More times yes than no I indeed threw up the food and had to start eating again. Beautiful way of handling children! But little by little I found other ways of getting rid of my food. Breakfast was the worst,because oatmeal or barley,cooked with prunes,were difficult to throw away.But for bread there were 2 ways: one was,that I tore the slices into little pieces,throwing them under the table,but always in different directions,so that the nurses would not suspect they were mine,but rather think that they had fallen under the table.The other trick was,that when all the other children since had left the dining-room and had to stand in line for the bathroom, before going to bed,I got up from my chair with a huge ball of food in my mouth,which I spit into the toilet,as soon as my turn came.
The 6-weeks' stay was plain torture!

For years and years,even as a grown-up,I had nightmares,in which I had my mouth full of a substance like clay or cement,which I could not swallow.Some kind of a paedagogue,that horrible woman! Possibly she was only "horrible" in my opinion.The children who ate to their hearts' content,were not bothered by her.I think,perhaps the director's dream was that all the children should go back to their parents fat and rosy,because the poor children from Amsterdam were always referred to as "Amsterdamsche bleekneusjes" (Dutch for "white noses" (faces of Amsterdam's children).After 6 weeks I was sent home to my parents, thank God. I should have stayed on another 3 to 6 weeks,because I had only gained 3 lbs. But it was decided,that for my emotional balance it was better to let me go home; (perhaps for the emotional balance of the director as well!!)

Dark times.

On the first of September 1939 the Second World-war broke out. Germany had already "annexed" Austria in March 1938 and Czechoslovakia in 1939 and Poland idem. Now it was Netherland's turn: the Germans occupied our country on May 10,1940.It was a terrible blow for the Dutch people,who had naively hoped,that they could stay neutral as in the First World War (1914-1918).But when the Germans attacked the Netherlands on that fatal day of May 10,1940 the Dutch people,who always had valued their freedom,fought a bitter fight.A division of the German army came down behind the frontiers in parachutes, dressed as nuns and priests,thus being able to mix with the Dutch population. The night of May 10 was a beautiful,summery night.At 4 o'clock in the morning it was completely clear,like in daytime. When people understood what was going on,the neighbors came out of their homes,one after another,looking at the sky.We really first thought,that the many airplanes in the sky were part of Dutch military maneuvers.Nobody could believe that it was an invasion and that the war had broken out and the Netherlands was occupied. 5 days later,on May 15 the government capitulated.According to the terms of the agreement Queen Wilhelmina and Dutch officials could leave the country. They went to England. The Dutch people were very disappoin- ted,when they heard that Queen Wilhelmina and her government had "aban-doned" them. But soon they understood that the government could do more for its subjects in exile than staying in the Netherlands,with the risk of being murdered by the Germans.At that time Princess Juliana,her husband Prince Bernhard and their 2 daughters : Princess Beatrix,the present Queen of the Netherlands, and Princess Irene were also allowed to leave.They went first to England and then to Canada,were their other 2 daughters: Princess Margriet and Princess Marijke were born.

Amsterdam-y

My father was my friend. Everything I could do together with my daddy,was fun. Lots of our "excursions" were on a bicycle.In Holland children are "born" on a bike!!.And every province in Holland has bicycle-routes,to make it less dangerous. I had my little seat in front of my dad,so that he could see me. I was perhaps 2 years old,when I went already with my dad to synagogue on Shabbat. Or my mother sent me there an hour before services would be over. And later, when I was between 12 and 18 years old,I went with my dad on longer rides, now on my own bike,and spending the night either in a house of the "Friends of Nature",of which there were several in Holland,in different parts of the country, or camping in a tent.

I was 12 years old when I finished Elementary-School and entered High-School It was a Jewish,private school and rather far away from where I lived. So,the aunt I loved most, the younger sister of my mom and single,gave me for my 12th birthday a second-hand bike.I do not remember who taught me,but somehow I learned riding on a bike and could go to school and later to work on a bike.I had my bike until the Nazis took it away in 1942.

My mom loved and admired my dad very much and she kept for example a strictly kosher household,even if she herself was not religious at all and did not even go to Shul on Yom Kippur,the highest holiday in the Jewish religion. And I loved my dad so much and was so proud of him,that when I went with him to Shul or visiting friends,walking arm in arm,I hoped that people would think,he was my husband.Of course at that time I was already between 16 and 18 years old. My first and my last sentence were always "my father and I".My first husband,Johnny, must have been jealous of the love for my father,because very often he used to say,rather impatiently, yes,I know "my father and I".

bicycle

May 10, 1940

I was working at that time as a secretary for the "Jewish Refugees Committee",the organization in Amsterdam that worked closely with the Dutch Immigration Authorities,who from April 1,1933,when Hitler came to power in Germany,had allowed German-Jewish families to settle in the Netherlands.Most of these families had been well-to-do in Germany and could bring in all or part of their capital, establishing factories and other kinds of business,thus bringing work to many Dutch people,who had been unemployed during the Depression years.Precisely on May 10, 1940 because I was working for the JRC I could have fled to England,because there were several ships of Dutch shipping companies ready to leave,trying to escape. But I tried in vain to get in touch with my mother at home and my father,who worked in the Jewish Hospital,the telephones having been cut off by the Germans, but destiny decided differently. One ship made it to England; the other one, the "Simon Bolivar" was torpedoed in the Atlantic Ocean. On that fatal day of May 15,1940 the Netherlands was in ruins,bridges burned or destroyed; of the big cities Rotterdam was the worst off: 30.000 of its habitants were killed in one day in an air-raid.The center of the city ws completely demolished.But the worst for the Dutch people still was to come.Only a few months after the capitulation the Germans began picking up mainly Jewish boys and young men,taking them to Germany "to work in the factories".But after the first death-certificates were received by the parents of these youths,nobody doubted what the Germans planned for the "rebellious Dutch people,and especially for the Jews.In 1942 the first transports of Jews, picked up in the streets or taken away from their homes,left the Netherlands. Nobody could believe that in the twentieth century men,women and children,old and young,could be killed in gas-chambers (in a way one would not even kill a sick dog),then finished off in the crematoria. Of course the "Radio Free Nether- lands", illegal but nevertheless listened to by thousands of Dutch people, brought information,but still people were incredulous,that a civilized country like Germany in the twentieth century was capable of such barbarism. The Jews in Amsterdam,who were picked up in "razzias" in the streets,were first brought to a building,that had been for years a theater,in which mostly Jewish artists per- formed. What irony!!

razzia

People laying on the floor in completely unhygienic conditions.Of course, for these hundreds of people who were picked up in one day,there were not enough toilets,no bathrooms at all.Soon they were full of headlice,one contaminating the other.From there they were taken to a camp,named "Westerbork" in the province of Drente,the North-Eastern part of the Netherlands and very near the town of Meppel,where I was born. This camp originally had been built by the Dutch Government for the German Jews,who entered the Netherlands "illegally",meaning that they had come in after a certain date,when the borders had been closed.It was a shame on the Dutch government that it put those German Jews that were considerered "illegals" in that camp,but on the other hand ,to be honest,it was a difficult situation for the Dutch government and the Dutch people.The crisis,which had begun in October 1929,still had not been overcome and there was a huge percentage of unemployment,so that a certain unrest was felt out of fear,that these German Jews would eventually take away Dutch subjects` jobs,their food and their living in general.

I had been working since August 1941 in the "Joodsche Raad",building and organization of the former "Jewish Refugee Committee",mentioned before.But this "Joodsche Raad" had an entirely different task,very sorry to say. Of course its organization was ordered by the Nazis; it did not come out of a Jewish brain.All the Jews of Amsterdam and later the Jews of the entire Netherlands,had to come and register.For every family there was a package of at least 20 different forms to be filled out.The forms were filled out first in hand-writing and then machine-typed. There were some 60 employees to do that work. I was one of them,but a short time later my boss made me the head of that department with 60 employees to supervise and check. When my colleagues, I did not consider them my employees, because I was much younger than most of them,heard of my plans to marry in June 1942, a small group of them came to me with a proposal: "we want to give you a present" they said,but "God knows how long we all shall be here" and so "we decided to give you something you will remember the rest of your life,if you will come back from where slowly every Jew will be going". "We shall organize the ceremony in the Synagogue and all the employees,together,will pay the expenses".What a beautiful gesture in a time when we all had more than enough worries about what would become of each and everybody!! I was so impressed that I did not know what to answer. But they said :"leave it to us and you will see".A few days before the wedding-day,June 14 1942 a delegation of the employees presented me with an album,in which were filed their letter to the President of the so-called "Snoga",Synagogue of the Sephardic Jews,because Johnny,my husband to-be,was Sephardic,his ancestors having arrived from Spain after the Inquisition.,in the 16th century.In that letter they had asked permission for the wedding to take place in the "Snoga".Then there was the affirmative answer of the President.Other letters made arrangements for a small choir and a photographer.And then the wedding-day arrived. It was all like a fairy-tale.The "Snoga" was,and still is,a historic monument and could not be touched by the Nazis,and was not. There is still no electrical light in the Snoga,the beautiful copper chandeliers have candles (to be exaxt there are 613 candles,each candle representing one of the 613 Mitzwoth (good deeds),mentioned in the Torah.

My long dress ,with a train,had been made by a friend of my mother;the material was nowhere to be found,everything already being scarce,but there Jim,Johnny's younger brother,was a big help.He was a textile-agent and eventually obtained something adequate.He had to travel to another city but did not come back empty-handed. He also ordered at the best florist of Amsterdam the beautiful bride's-bouquet.The Synagogue was a dream,with all the 613 candles burning. All my colleagues with their families being present.There were 900 people. Everybody wanted to be there.because a wedding in the "Snoga" did not take place every day.It was not allowed to make photos in the "Snoga",but when leaving it,at least 20 were made by a colleague, who was a professional photographer

Shoga

You could not name Westerbork before the German occupation a "concentration-camp"in the meaning it had later,but it was a camp where these German "illegal" Jews were concentrated,far from home,far from the big cities,but with the big difference that they were not mistreated and did not suffer hunger. The Nether-lands,a very small country with approximately 8 million inhabitants did its share of taking in so many German Jews,compared to other much bigger countries,that closed their borders to these emigrants,who did not have where to go. It was a common sight in Westerbork to see women with their hair shaved of and their heads in a bandage with some desinfection-liquid, to get rid of the lice.What a shame and what humilliation!

In September 1940 I started with my "Hachsharah",preparing to go to Israel as an "Olah Chadashah" (a new immigrant).I had already started before the Second Worldwar broke out,to take Intensive Iwrith-courses,because that was the condition in the Netherlands,in order to be accepted for "Hachsharah". In the Netherlands a girl first had to work for one year in a bigger household,like a pension,a hotel and/or a hospital-kitchen,to be prepared for the hard work and hard life in Israel,in a Kibbutz. After that year you could choose to learn what- ever job you liked,or was needed most in a Kibbutz,like tending the vegetable -garden or the chickens,etc. At that time the Kibbutzim were not as sophisticated as some bigger Kibbutzim now: there were no nurseries,so the jobs for the girls were in the kitchen or vegetable-garden or chicken-pens.The cows,for example : their care,cleaning of the stables and milking were jobs of boys and men [consi- dered too heavy work for women and girls]

In March 1941,when working in a pension, (as part of Hachsharah) I met my first husband Juda,(nick-named Johnny.We started to go out together,meaning we went for a ride on our bikes,which still were in our possession.

Kibbutz

We were not allowed to enter any restaurant or other public building,because everywhere there were signs with the"friendly" reading "voor Joden verboden", (forbidden to Jews).On September 7,1941 we celebrated our engagement at my parents' apartment with only the nearest relatives and a few intimate friends.At that time we did not yet have the obligation to wear the yellow "Star of David" with the inscription "Jood" (Jew).In the meantime transports to "unknown destinations" had already started. First the Nazis took only single Jewish men and women. So,at the end of January 1942 we started the formalities to get married as soon as possible in a civil ceremony only.That civil marriage protecting us from the transports at least for a while.

On March 11,1942,finally,our civil marriage took place. We lived at separate addres ses. By June 14,1942 at my real marriage with Johnny,everybody was wearing that infamous "Star of David",my husband and I included. I at least could hide it behind my beautiful bride 's-bouquet.Our wedding, in spite of everything, was unforgettable,and so it was meant to be,because my colleagues (abt.60 people) organized and paid for the wedding!! Any gift,we would give you,will get lost,they said,but if you come back alive,you will always remember your wedding-day,organized by all of us. One colleague even made the photos!! A while later some of my colleagues went into hiding and survived. My husband and I did not have the means to pay for a hiding-place and landed in Westerbork, I less than 2 months after our marriage,my husband abt. 6 months later.

When I was in highschool I wanted to become a pharmacist,but a university-education was very expensive in the Netherlands and my parents could not afford to pay the cost.Instead,in 1934 I started to work as a secretary in the daytime and went to school at night,taking shorthand,typewriting, accounting and commercial German and English. I worked in two different jobs: four years in a small factory.making suspenders,belts,etc.for men and then,since November 1938 in the German-Jewish Refugees Committee,that later became the so called "Joodse Raad".
On August 10,1942,less than 2 months after my wedding, I was sent to the concentration camp in the North-Eastern part of the Netherlands,named Westerbork,where I was 17 months. I was put to work in the administration.
A short time later I became the secretary for a Jewish lawyer,who was allowed to make petitions to the camp's Nazi-authority in special cases.
My husband,Juda (nick-named Johnny) Colaco Osorio came to Westerbork in April 1943 and became ill with jaundice a while later,being in the hospital for several weeks. I could not even visit him,because jaundice is an infectious disease.
The food in Westerbork was horrible,f.i. soup with the potato-skins swimming in it,and soup was the only food we received,besides the bread-rations. But what we could do in the evening was going to the kitchen and see if there were some boiled potatoes in the skin.Sometimes there was,sometimes there was not.I lived at the time in a small house in the camp.It was meant for 5 couples,but,as my husband was in the hospital,I was there alone!!
We had a small electrical burner (secretly!),so we could warm up the potatoes.

Middle of January 1944 we both were sent to Theresienstadt,were we arrived on my birthday,January 20. We could keep all our clothes,warm sweaters etc., but they took away our watches and fountain-pens. An old colleague of mine, German and a veteran of the First World-War adviced me,not to take a job for the "Kowed".You are young,he said,and strong,find a job where you earn extra food.And that was what I did! The food was good,but too little.By the way: the food in Westerbork was horrible,f.i.: soup with the potato-skins swimming in it, and soup was the only food besides the bread-rations.

As I was young and healthy I had to work very hard,but received half a ration extra,which of course I shared with my husband.The food was good but not enough to live on.
Theresienstadt (or Terezin) was indeed for West- and Middle-European Jews.And in sofar I know,people were not killed in Theresienstadt.What happened was,that in 1941 a terrible epidemic of typhus broke out and thousands
of people died.And the same thing happened in 1945,when thousands of men, who fled from different concentration-camps,when the war was over and the Germans abandoned them, came to Theresienstadt in rags and loaded with lice,causing again typhus.The first thing the Sanitary Department of Theresien-stadt did,was burning all the rags,the prisoners wore.They had to go to a certain place and assemble outside the barracks,get undressed and desinfected,but that was already too late for some. They were hospitalized,but unfortunately many nurses,male and female,were infected by them and died.Terrible to have to happen after the war was over!!
I myself,having come back from Oederan,walking for hours and hours and sleeping on a paper mattress on the floor,got a very high fever and it was suspected that I had typhus too. The word in German is more precise: "Flecktyphus" The Russian female-doctor,who did not even have a stethos-
cope,came a few hours later with her thermometer and diagnosed: "no fever",thank God. Flecktyphus was caused by a bug,that sat in the body-hairs and clothes of above-mentioned men.

typhus

To come back to what I wrote about Theresienstadt or Terezin,the camp was indeed for privileged West- and Middle-European Jews. And in sofar I know, people were not killed in Theresienstadt. What happened,was that in 1941 a terrible epidemic of typhus broke out and thousands of people died.And the same thing happened in 1945,when thousands of men,who fled from different concentration-camps,when the war was over,came to Theresienstadt in rags and loaded with lice, causing again typhus.They had to go to a certain place and assemble outside the barracks,get undressed and desinfected,but that was already too late for some.

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end of Oct, 1944

When we arrived in Auschwitz,we had to step out of the freight-train and leave everything behind. A Nazi ordered us to walk up to a certain place and stand in line. Then he started one by one to send us either to the left or to the right. Soon enough we found out,that to the right was the "wrong" direction.In our group of several Dutch women there was a young woman,who did not look too strong. She was a medical doctor and when the Nazi wanted to send her to the right,she said: "I may look weak,but I am a medical doctor and am accustomed to hard work".A miracle happened: he let her go to the left. I saw so many people,young and old,whom I knew from Amsterdam going to the right and feared the worst for them.When I came to the room where the camp-Kommandant was sitting,he ordered me to take off my wedding-ring. I did as if I could not get it off my finger,but he had a quick solution: he took a tweezer and cut it off my finger. Thank God he did not cut off my finger too! After a while we were brought to a half empty barrack.The few women there,all from Hungary,were rather nasty and "promised" us,that the next day we would be gassed. As they said: "tomorrow you will be brought to the showers,but instead of water gas will come out". That night we had to sleep with 8 women in a double bed,without a mattress on wooden planks.When one woman turned around,the other seven had to turn around too. The next day,in the middle of the night, 3 am. or 4 am. we had to stand on "Appell" and were counted and counted to no end,standing in the icy-cold of late October with hardly any clothes: I wore a thin dress without sleeves,no panty,etc.etc.

3 or 4 days later we were sent in freight-trains to a little town in Eastern Germany between Leipzig and Dresden,named Oederan,where we had to work in a munition factory.It had been a textile-factory,but was transformed in 3 months into the munition-factory.

Ausch

We were 500 women in Oederan: on one floor 200 (German,Czechoslovakian and Dutch women; on another floor 300 (Hungarian and Polish).In the factory we worked in 3 shifts: from 6.30 am till 2.30 pm; from 2.30 pm till 10.30 pm and from 10.30 pm till 6.30 am.,making cartridge-cases.We were not allowed to talk to the technicians in charge of the machines.The Nazi-Aufseherinnen took care of that.They caught me once talking to the technician at my machine and sent me to the Oberaufseherin,who beat me up,etc.(as a matter of fact the technician started talking to me).She threw me against a wall and screamed to me about my parents being hidden for sure and forcing me to tell her were they were. I told her,that they were sent to Auschwitz long ago and surely be dead by now (which of course was a lie).Then she had me put into solitary confinement an entire day and night,in a pitchdark room without ventilation,without food or at least water and without a toilet.But I did not give up.The next morning she let me ou. The Czechoslovakian lady-prisoner,in charge of the kitchen,had kept my meal hidden for me! In spite of what had happened, the technician brought me secret-ly for Christmas an apple,a piece of cake and a little comb,that I did not need, because in Auschwitz they had shaved my hair (and not only from my head). "They" were men who did those jobs.
The food we received in Oederan was: too little to live on and too much to starve! 5 days a week we got half a liter watery soup,made from a kind of watermelon,180 grams of bread and surrogate coffee.The only solid food we got was on Saturdays a boiled potato and a tablespoon of cottage cheese and on Sundays noodle soup with some little pieces of meat in it.
When we were off from work,when it was in the day-time,the few Dutch girls, a all married,but without a husband,would sit on each other's bed and enter-tain each other: telling stories or jokes, exchanging recepes,etc,etc.
Beginning of April 1945 the American Army came nearer and nearer.We heard the bombing,we saw the skies red from fires,etc.The "Aufseherinnen" got the order from their superiors to leave: they went with passenger-trains and the 500 women were loaded into cattle-trains.In the day-time we rode between the 2 fronts: the American and the Russian,at night we were standing on the rails.There was hardly any food for us. After a week or so a "delegation* of our Czechoslovakian group went to talk to the "Aufseherinnen",letting them realize that something had to be done.The group told,that we were rather near-by Theresienstadt and that they were sure,that the camp would receive us "with open arms". The "Aufseherinnen" went to talk to their superiors and they gave permission to let us go.We walked for many hours and at last we arrived at the gates of the Theresienstadt-camp.The roofs of the buildings had big red crosses,job of the International Red Cross,so that the American or Russian armies would not bomb the camp.

liberation

Specially in Oederan,when there were always several "Aufseherinnen" in the munition-factory I sometimes got upset.And to calm me down I sang (without anybody hearing me) a very interesting German song,as follows:

Die Gedanken sind frei,
wer kann sie erraten,
sie fliegen vorbei
wie naechtliche Schatten,
man kann ja im Herzen,
stets lachen und scherzen
und denken dabei,die Gedanken sind frei!!

translated in English:

Thoughts are free
who can guess them
they fly away like nightly shadows
Some-one can in his heart
always laugh and joke
and think at the same time: thoughts are free.

Shadows

I saw most of my relatives from father's side and mother's side pass by in Westerbork: young and old,little children and older ones on their journey to Auschwitz and I could not do anything to save them. I tried so hard when my aunt Sadie,my mother's younger and only sister passed through,but no chance to get her out of the transport.
Nobody came back!! That both my sister and I came back to our country,the Netherlands,was a miracle.
One day in Theresienstadt,it must have been end of October 1944,I was already deported to Auschwitz,there was an announcement,that people,who were interested to be interchanged to Switzerland for German soldiers, could sign up.
My sister was interested,but everybody told her: don't fall in the trap,where do you think you will be going.But she insisted,that I,her sister,was probably already killed in Auschwitz,and she did not care what would happen to her.So,she signed up and really was sent,with a whole lot of other people,to a camp in Switzerland.
From there she was chosen to become a house-keeper in a boarding school for Dutch highschool-age girls,daughters of rich parents,who could afford to pay the fees.The boarding-school was in the Western,French part of Switzerland,in a little village,named Glion. When my sister listened on the Swiss Radio about survivors in Theresienstadt,and she heard my name mentioned,she could not wait a minute longer in Glion and resigned from her job.She came back to Holland in August 1945.

On May 15,1945 Theresienstadt was liberated by the Russians. We were very afraid,that they would take us to Russia and eventually Siberia.A few prominent Dutch gentlemen,also prisoners,one a former professor at the University of Leiden the second the director of the Red Cross in Holland,tried to get in touch via Switzerland with the Dutch Government to get the help we needed,namely transportation from Theresienstadt to Holland.But the answer was,sadly,that the Germans had robbed out the country and that we ourselves had to find a way to return on our own.For the Danish women-ex-prisoners Danmark sent beautiful, white busses,adorned with flowers and flags. The children in the orphanage had to be sent back too,in one or another way: I was given a little Dutch girl, 3 1/2 years old,a girlfriend got a little boy,5 years old. A whole group of women,with and without children were taken to a place in Pilsen,Czecho-Slovakia,near an airplane-field ,with American soldiers. We were provided with paper-mattresses to sleep on the floor and there was no food. The American soldiers behaved wonderfully and even cooked for us a few times.And also gave us from their own rations.On a certain day I saw a huge plane landing on the field.I ran to see if we could get help.It turned out,that the plane came from France to look for French wounded and/or dead soldiers.When I asked the pilot if he could take us,he answered that this time there would be no space.We were 4 people: my friend and I and the 2 children.But,he said "we will be back and I promise you to take you to Nancy" (in the North-Eastern part of France). And he kept his promise!! It took my friend and me 16 days to get back to Holland.From Nancy we were taken to Arlon in Luxembourg,then to Brussels,where an uncle of the little girl was already waiting for her.From Brussels we were sent to Eindhoven,in the South of Holland.And the biggest surprise was,that my parents were at the time living in Eindhoven,after they were liberated by the Americans in September 1944, (when I had still the worst before me!)The gentleman,who had to register me,called my parents,who came after a while to take me to their place (in the apartment of friends from Amsterdam).

I wanted to go back to Amsterdam as soon as possible,to get a job ,to distract myself from all I went through,(not to forget,because an experience like mine cannot be forgotten,even if I would live to be a hundred years old). And I had to make a living to be able to buy the most necessary things,I lacked: like clothing, shoes, a warm coat for the winter, etc.etc.

return

To think that after our liberation by the Russians,and end of the war also for us, thousands of people died as a consequence of the typhus-epidemic. And not only the thousands of men,who came already infected to Theresienstadt,but also all the nurses and many doctors.who treated the patients. There was no time to bury those thousands of people,who did not survive,individually,so they had to be buried in collective graves,in order not to extend the epidemic,there was already.
Many people were buried without knowing their names.Only later when certain friends or companions all of a sudden were missing (they simply were not there anymore), it was assumed that they must have died and been buried with the thousand of other prisoners.Is it not tragic,that,though the war was over and more than enough people had perished in the gas-chambers of Auschwitz,or died a "natural death" from hunger.privations or simply of giving-up,those thousands of people,who already thought that they had "made" it,had to die as a conse- quence of that terrible "Flecktyphus-epidemic"?? .
Should I be grateful,that I came out of hell alive? I ask myself that question very often! I think,it was unjust,that I was one of the few,who came back to the country,in which I was born, the Netherlands. I know for sure,that the many times I was taken of the list of people,who were chosen to be sent to Auschwitz, other people went in my place.And having been sent away many months before me ,had a lesser chance to survive,because of sickness,hunger or worse treat- ment than I got,because I finally came to Auschwitz on October 26,1944,when treatment there was bad enough,but probably not as bad,as say,6 months earlier. And at least end of October 1944 the Nazis apparently were too busy with other, for them more important things,than for example to bother with giving us the infamous numbers on our arms.And when I think of the many friends of our Mizrachi-Youth-movement,which existed in Amsterdam before the Second World- war ,and were prominent in lots of ways and much more intelligent than I and died most of them in Bergen Belsen,then there is another doubting why I came back alive and all those prominent friends perished.

My own sister,Map de Lime, had an immense luck in her fate.She was hidden with a girl-friend in the home of the parents of Ds.Sebastiaan Ader,a Protestant minister, who,as the head of an organization to find hiding-places for Jews and then feed them and provide them with everything necessary. He did not hesitate to risk his life to save other,Jewish lives.Sadly,he was not careful enough and the Nazis started to follow him,at last getting hold of him and shooting him to death. He was so much loved by everybody,who received his help,that nobody would address him as "minister" Ader. He was for everybody "Uncle Bas".All the Jewish men, women and children,who survived because of his unbelievable courage and love for mankind,collected money enough to establish the "Dominee Ader-Forest" in Israel,in his memory. Coming back to my sister,as said, she was hidden in the home of ds.Ader's parents in Groningen (in the North-Eastern part of Holland).
My own parents were hidden in the so-called "pastorie",the home of Ds.Ader and his wife in Friesland.There were around 30 people hidden in his home,up= stairs under the roof of the home.Sometimes,when visitors came to Ds.Ader's home,and the people upstairs made some noise,Ds.Ader always told his guests: "that are the mice"!!
But a certain day the whole group was denounced and had to flee.Ds.Ader got for everybody places in the South of Holland,in Limburg,a very Catholic part of the country: my parents had to hide for three days in a lineseed-field,suffering from thirst,because of the hot,burning sun and of course terrified for what could happen to them,when they would be found by somebody,who was not exactly in favour of Jews,being saved from concentration-camps. Thank God,those three days also passed and a new hiding-place was found for them. My sister was brought into a big family,with seven or eight children; the head of the family being a coal-miner.They could use some extra money,paid by the organization of Ds.Ader.It was a very loving family and the children treated my sister like another sister. "Tante" (aunt) Marijke,as my sister named her,the mother of the family,told the neighbours,that a niece from Friesland was coming to visit them for a while.The story does not tell if the neighbours believed her,but anyhow they kept their mouthes shut and did not do any harm.

Marijke-

Quite to the contrary one of aunt Marijke's sons,an older son from a former marriage, a no-good since he was a small boy,one fateful day came to his mother, asking her to lend him some money,which she refused to give him,on which he answered her,that she would be sorry for that.And for sure he did his job: he denounced his own mother and step-father of having a Jewess in their home. A few days later the Gestapo came,found my sister in a room upstairs,tortured her to get the "truth" out of her,but she did not divulge her secrets.They asked her for names of other Jews,hidden in the neighbourhood,on which she answered that she did not know of anybody.
Then they asked where her parents were,
on which she answered,that they were since long dead,because they had been sent to Auschwitz.Meanwhile she was telling them this,she was standing on 2 letters from my parents,which were sent to her by special messengers,all members of the same Ds.Ader organization.
When she heard the Gestapo coming up the stairs to her room,she had hidden the letters under the rug. She was brought to the prison in Maastricht,the capital of the state of Limburg and there again investigated and tortured. But she did not give anything away,insisting again,that she did not know anything and that her parents were dead. The Gestapo-officer,a Dutch-man,was apparently so impressed with her,that at last he had her sent back to her cell,stating: "you are a Jewess,but I have respect for you".Imagine that kind of statement out of the mouth of a Nazi.She was only 20 years old at the time!! She was later brought to Westerbork,the concentration-camp in the North-East of the Netherlands and when she was "ready" for transport,she could "chose" (a miracle) between Bergen-Belsen or Therersienstadt. She wanted to go with a group of dear friends from the Mizrachi-Youth-Movement,because of their high quality of morals, ethics,intelligence,etc. But she hesitated,because she knew that I was in Theresien stadt with my husband,Johnny. And so,thank God,she chose Theresienstadt, which saved her life.In Bergen-Belsen for sure she would have died from dysentery or other diseases,because she was physically not a strong person.
When she arrived in Theresienstadt (Terezin),I believe it was around July 6,1944, I was awaiting her some place,reassuring her that life in Theresienstadt was "not bad at all".She was shocked by my observation,but it was true: as long as you did not do something that was "outrageous".

P.S. The stepfather was sent to a concentration-camp in Germany and did not survive. The mother was sent to Ravensbrueck,but miraculously was sent back home to her 8 children.

The South of the Netherlands was liberated by the American Army in September 1944.After we were reunited beginning of August 1945 with our parents in Eindhoven (in the South of the Netherlands) ,I myself coming back from Theresienstadt and my sister from Switzerland.We wanted to go back to Amsterdam as soon as possible,to get a job again.
The journey to Amsterdam was not easy,because all the bridges were burnt or broken. I do not know if by the Americans or the Germans.
We had to hire a jeep and go through the various rivers,but at last we made it to Amsterdam to start our lives all over.
I got through a former colleage a job in a Jewish Information-Office,where people could investigate about their families,but,after a while,found a much better job in an export-firm.My sister started to work in a Jewish organization,that helped people to get back on their feet.At the same time she studied to become a Psychiatric Social Worker.

I lost 36 members of my family: my first husband,Johnny Colaco Osorio,uncles,aunts, cousins.One cousin, a cantor in the South of the Netherlands,who with his wife also was murdered by the Nazis,had two little girls.that they wanted to be saved. They were taken in by a Catholic lawyer and his wife,who did not have children of their own. They lived in the South of Holland.The girls were 8 and 6 years old at the time.When the war was over and seeing that the parents did not come back,they decided to adopt the girls.The girls were very happy with the lawyer's couple.But when my dad heard about the eventual adoption,he made a law-suit to avoid that step,argueing before a judge,that my cousin and his wife had been orthodox and had always said,that when the war would be over,he would make "alliah" with his wife and children to Israel. The judge decided,that the children should be raised by a Jewish couple,in the city where my cousin and family had lived,and had been very inti-—mate friends.The girls,in the meantime 11 and 9 years old,were very angry with my dad,as they had been happy with the lawyer's couple.But... they got over it,because they both married Jewish young men.

x that was in August 1945.

A terrible loss happened to my family beginning of September 1945. It was Yom Kippur and my dad was in a synagogue in Amsterdam. But he was ordered to go that same day to an office for people that had survived,either because they came back from a concentration-camp or came out of hiding,to apply for a house or appartment,according to the size of the family.My dad got a small appartment in a neighbourhood in the West of Amsterdam,where no Jews lived. He got a bed and some more furniture,that must have been fabricated 100 years earlier.Real scandalous and inhuman.
Of course my dad was very upset and really afraid to go home to his wife and two daughters. 3 days later he disappeared. My mother very often came to pick him up after work,but when she arrived at the hospital,where he worked as a cook,pastry-baker and mashgiach, she was told,that he had not arrived in the morning. The four of us at the time were living at the home of my only surviving cousin and her family. She wanted to help us,because my dad had saved her,her husband and 3 months old baby from being sent to a concentration-camp by finding them a home in a Christian family.My Mom,sister and I were sleeping on a mattress on the floor in a small room upstairs, and my cousin got a bed for my father,because he suffered from lower backpain.
When my cousin's husband came home from work and heard,that my dad was missing,he went out,in spite of the darkness,because the lights went out in the entire city of Amsterdam at 8 o'clock in the evening,to investigate at the police, hospitals etc.,but without any success.
13 weeks later we got a phone-call from the police in Rotterdam,that the corpse of my dad was found in a river and that my sister and I should come to recognize the body. What that meant to my sister and me, I don't have to explain!!
The ration-coupons for a whole month for the four of us were found in his pocket. And we were a whole month without them and could not buy any food !!
In the Chanukah-week we buried my dad at a Jewish cementary in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam and our mom,my sister and I sat Shiva.
This tragedy,after what we all had gone through during the Holocaust with concentration-camps and hiding-places was more than we could bear! But life goes on,as the saying goes!!

After I came back from the concentration-camps (June 1945) I started working again as a secretary.In October 1947 I met my second husband ,Werner Schaps,who was in Europe on a business-trip,in the home of mutual friends [his parents' friends from Hamburg, Germany before the war, and my friends in Amsterdam since 1945.We fell in love and were married after 3 weeks,on the same day that my husband had to go back to Colombia via London and Miami,leaving me behind.After the ceremony in the City Hall,we went to the hotel where my husband stayed and had an intimate lunch with the small family left and a few friends.After lunch my husband and I went up to his room,to start packing for his departure.Then we went by taxi to the Schiphol-airport

After the plane had left,I went back all alone to my mother and sister. When I entered the livingroom and saw the flower-arrangements that had arrived while I was at the airport,I started to cry: imagine bride of a few hours,but without the bridegroom.That was on October 31,1947.Very soon after that date I started to prepare for my voyage to Barranquilla, Colombia,South America,not knowing with which means I was going to travel: plane-tickets had to be reserved 6 months ahead,ship-reservations idem..But there I got help from a former boss,his company having exported all kinds of food and other merchandise since 1898,precisely to the "neighbourhood of Colombia,namely Venezuela Dutch Guyana (Suriname),Curacao and the other ABC-islands: Aruba and Bonaire. And also a business-relation of my husband helped to get me on a Dutch freighter with accommodation for 6 passengers.

After a lot of problems: the Colombian Ambasador in the Hague did not want to give me a visa,because I had to travel alone,and,as he said; "'to protect me from "white slave-market".Meanwhile,the visa my husband had send for me from Colombia,after his return from Europe,was lying on the Ambassador's desk,which he confessed to me some 10 days later,after I had decided to go by train to Antwerp,Belgium,to get my visa there. Lots of difficulties and lossof time.The Ambassador's secretary asked me what my reli- gion was and advised me not to say "Jewish",because he would not give me the visa.

Imagine: I hate to lie, but when the Ambassador asked me what religion I had, I said Catholic. I think,God forgave me,because I needed my visa,that at last was stamped into my passport.And now I could start my boat-voyage on December 11,1947.

Amsterdam

On high sea I got 2 telegrams from my new husband,Werner Schaps: the first one saying "congratulations that you made it" and the second one "meeting you in Curacao".
That was a real surprise,because the boat-trip to Barranquillla,Colombia would have taken 5 weeks.And it was rather boring on that ship: no library, no swimming-pool. And the other five passengers were not too interesting. I became friendly with one of the engineers,so that at least I had somebody to talk to,after his work was finished in the evening. Later on he visited us several times,when his ship was due in Barranquilla.
The food on the ship was common, real sailor's food,much too heavy for my stomach,after having left the cold climate of Europe and having entered the sub-tropics and later the tropics. But...it was better than having to wait 6 long months for a plane. On deck the "flying fishes"were nice to look at. I also studied some Spanish on the ship and had brought along some books to read. But there were no parties,nor other entertainment during the long weeks at sea. When we arrived in Curacao on January 6,1948,early in the morning, I did not have to wait long until I saw my husband coming to the pier.

After I got my new husband's second telegram,announcing his meeting me in Curacao,I started to worry,if I would recognize him on arrival ,as I had known him only for three weeks and was then separated from him for more than two months. But my fear was superfluous.Even with an entirely different way of dressing in Europe in October,in a dark suit and with a tie,in Curacao and also in Barranquilla, he was dressed in a white linen suit and a short-sleeved white shirt and white shoes. I recognized him right away with his kind,young-looking face and sparkling grey eyes,radiating happiness (he was 32 then). We stayed a few days in Curacao and went on January 10,1948 by plane to Barranquilla (Colombia) to meet my parents-in-law and brother-in-law. That was on a Saturday.And the next Monday I went with my husband to his office and did not quit working until I turned 65,having worked for 49 years.Even when carrying my four children and then rearing them,I continued working at home for my husband's business,making phone-calls and taking care of the correspondence in English,German and Spanish.
Now I just turned 84 in January,doing something for myself like listening to Israeli music,studying Iwrith,playing bridge twice a week and also working as a volunteer in the Mount Sinai Medical Center here in Miami Beach (since July 1984) and trying to write my history, and not to forget taking care of my plants on the balcony.

After my second husband and I arrived in Barranquilla,Colombia on January 10, 1948 we first lived in the home of my parents-in-law,which was not exactly ideal: my father-in-law being a "German-Jewish tyrant": everything had to go his way. And my brother-in-law sleeping next to our room.My mother-in-law was a saint, which made life bearable.Thank God,a few months later we could move in a little house next to the house of my parents-in-law. For sure because of the privation I suffered those 2 years and 10 months in the various concentration-camps I had 3 miscarriages: 2 before our first child was born and 1 between our first child and second child.When I was at last pregnant with our first child I had to be in bed a few months and got several injections. But when our son Marcel Helmuth was born on March,7 1950 and did not gain weight, it turned out that he had "cystic fibrosis" .But that was only diagnosed in the United States by a pediatrician when Marcel was already 8 1/2 years old.

Our second son,Michael Bruno was born 3 years later on March 8,1953 and was healthy. Our third child, a girl,Myriam Evelyn,born on May 21,1955 had the same problem of not gaining weight,as Marcel had .She was 3 1/2 years old when she was diagnosed by Dr.Harry Schwachman in Boston's Childrens Hospital with the same "cystic fibrosis".At that time,it was the year 1958, children with this condition did not live long. Nowadays they would have had a better chance! Myriam passed away when she was 7 years old,Marcel was nearly 23 and we buried him on my birthday,January 20,1973. Our 2 boys,after having finished highschool, studied in the USA: Marcel at the University of Miami,Michael at North-Eastern University.

When in March 1980 after a biopsy my husband,Werner,was diagnosed having cancer (lymphoma) our physician in Barranquilla,Colombia,told him and me: "Mr.Werner go to the the United States,here you will be dead in 6 months,over there you have a chance to live much longer".We decided to follow his advice.Dr.D. recommended an excellent oncologist in Miami Beach and indeed,thank God, Werner lived another 5 years,of course not without a lot of suffering from the side effects of the chemo-therapy. Still,Werner was till perhaps 3 months,before he passed away,in good spirit most of the time: studying and writing essays to prepare for his Ph.D-degree in Gerontology (the study of old-age-psychology).The first year Werner's treatment was only chemo-therapy and after about 8 months he was in remission for the entire year 1981.
~~1981~~.Every 3 months we went back to the oncologist in Miami Beach for check-ups,staying in a hotel for about a week.But end of March 1982 it was discovered,that the cancer had come back.It was decided,that Werner should get two six-week-cycles of "whole body-radiation",because lymphoma is located in many lymphnodes. We went back to Barranquilla for a few days,because Werner had to organize his business,appoint somebody to replace him,meanwhile he was away for his twice six-weeks-treatment.

cancer

On occasion of a Holocaust Memorial-evening in 1996 the Rabbi of the Cuban Hebrew Congregation,where I am a member,here in Miami Beach,Rabbi Shimon Dudai,asked me to "say a few words" about my experience in the Holocaust.To say it "in a few words" is very difficult.Even after 59 years not one day goes by,that I am not somehow reminded of what happened to many of us,then. That is something I,and thousands of others with the same terrible experience, will have to live with for the rest of our lives! What most impresses me still,is how the nazis did everything they could,to take away our dignity,to ridicule us,to humilliate us, and letting us stand on so-called"Appell" in the middle of the night and in the bitter cold of winter,with nothing on than a summer-dress without sleeves,no panty, and counting and counting us for hours and hours,while our stomachs were hurting for hunger.

memorial

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Holocaust Memorial Day;

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Once I was beaten and put in solitary confinement for a day, in a dark room, without windows, without any food and without a toilet, because a Nazi-woman (Oberaufseherin), who interrogated me, did not believe me, when I told her that my parents were sent to Auschwitz long ago and most probably not alive anymore. She was quite correct in not-believing me, because, thank God, they were hidden in Holland, where they were born In fact they were already liberated by the Americans, 4 months earlier when I still had the worst before me.

When people would say to me: thank Gd, you survived, I still feel somehow uncomfortable. Why should I survive, when thousands of Jews, much intelligent than I, more dignified, more holy, were murdered by the nazis because they were Jews.

I remember Rosh Hashanah 1945, when I went to Shul with my Dad and standing there I said to myself: "what are you doing here? You are a hypocrite, how can you believe in a God, who let all those terrible things happen to the Jews. After many, many years I came back, if not to religion, at least to the tradition, in which I was brought up and which I enjoy immensely.